

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
DEPARTMENTAL MANUAL

Museum Property Handbook
(411 DM, Volume I)

Chapter 15 Artwork and Artifacts in Administrative Office Spaces

A. INTRODUCTION

This Chapter provides basic guidance for managing museum property in administrative office spaces. For a broader understanding of the preservation and protection needs of museum property, and for detailed information on specific topics, employees responsible for the management of museum property should refer frequently to other chapters in this Handbook. Refer to Chapter 411 (2.3E) of the Departmental Manual for all standards pertaining to the display of museum property in administrative office spaces.

1. Purpose of administrative artwork and artifacts

Many units of the Department of the Interior display museum property in office spaces (e.g., individual and communal offices, hallways, foyers, and meeting rooms). When appropriately displayed, artwork and artifacts serve several purposes. They provide moments of inspiration to employees, keeping them in touch with the resources they often manage at a distance. They serve a public relations function by communicating the mission of the bureau to its visitors. Such use of museum property is appropriate so long as basic preservation, protection, and documentation standards are met and practices are followed.

Bureau and/or unit planning documents should address the use of museum property in office settings. Refer to the unit's Scope of Collection Statement (SOCS) and consult the bureau's and/or unit's designated museum property official to identify museum property displayed in a particular office space. Refer to Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of SOCS.

2. Responsibilities

The official designated to manage museum property is responsible for drafting management documents (including, in conjunction with the Museum Property Committee, the SOCS), approving the selection of artwork and artifacts to be displayed, providing for monitoring and recording environmental levels, ensuring that appropriate actions

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are taken to achieve standards, and establishing a positive working relationship with the occupants of office spaces in which artwork and artifacts are displayed.

While the display of museum property in office spaces requires judgement and vigilance, such use need not be burdensome to administrative office staff. Employees should be able to proudly display and enjoy the bureau's museum property while playing an active, supportive role in ensuring its long-term preservation. The primary responsibilities of office occupants are described in Figure 15.1, "Sample Employee Responsibility Agreement".

3. Selecting museum property for use in office spaces

Selection of museum property used in office spaces should be based on the stability of the materials, and on the evaluation of cultural, scientific, and monetary values. Museum property that is culturally sensitive, particularly vulnerable to the environment, of high scientific value, or that has donor restrictions is generally inappropriate for use in an office setting. The risks present in each office setting should be evaluated; where the risk of theft, inadvertent damage, or rate of deterioration is unacceptable, the display of museum property in that area is not recommended.

4. Restricted use of artwork and artifacts

Museum property should be used only for display, never as functional office equipment. Use of a historic pot as a paper clip holder, a textile as a throw-rug, or a heavy urn as a door stop are examples of inappropriate use of museum objects. Artifacts and artwork should be displayed respectfully and in a manner that will ensure their long-term preservation.

NOTE: Under certain circumstances, a museum object (e.g., a historic couch) may serve its original function. However, such use is inherently damaging, and must meet guidelines for consumptive use. Refer to the Museum Property Handbook, Volume II, Chapter 4, Section E.

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5. Display of employee property in office spaces

Items that are the personal property of employees are not considered museum property. They are not subject to the standards, policies, and procedures that apply to bureau museum property unless they are lent to the unit for official purposes. Refer to Museum Property Handbook, Volume II, Chapter 5. To avoid confusing government property with an employee's property, it is a good practice for employees to provide their supervisors with a current inventory of personal items located in their office. It is recommended that employees also mark their property in a unique way.

B. MANAGEMENT OF OFFICE ARTWORK AND ARTIFACTS

Recognizing that the display of museum property is a secondary function of office spaces, the Department of the Interior has developed basic preservation and protection standards applicable to such areas. Chapter 411 DM 2.3E outlines standards for managing administrative artwork and artifacts (refer to Appendix A, Section B of this part of the Handbook). Where standards cannot be met and artwork or artifacts are actively deteriorating, management should take action to ensure their long-term preservation. This may include removing such objects from display or relocating them to safer areas. Unit managers are required to notify the designated reviewing official in writing when standards cannot be met (411 DM 2.3).

C. CONSERVATION SURVEY

Through a Conservation Survey (collection condition survey), conservators should provide the unit a condition assessment of artwork and artifacts displayed in office spaces and guidance on setting priorities for care and conservation treatment. Refer to Chapter 10, "Conservation Treatment" for additional guidance on procuring a Conservation Survey.

D. SECURITY AND FIRE PROTECTION

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1. Key control

Issuing keys to office spaces housing museum property should be strictly controlled by the use of a signed hand receipt. Key control procedures and accountability should be reviewed annually. Keys to display cases should be issued only by the designated official and only to employees actively involved in the management of museum property. Issuance and return of keys to display cases should be tracked following procedures recommended in Appendix I, "Protection of Museum Property," Section G.

2. Opening and closing procedures

Opening and closing procedures should be written, approved, and practiced. Written procedures vary in content and format depending on the office space being addressed. Appendix I, "Protection of Museum Property," Section F, provides guidance on developing such procedures. Item 3 of Section F discusses special considerations for office areas, and suggests several alternatives for securing areas that may not be "opened" or "closed" in the conventional sense.

Opening and closing procedures for office areas should include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- a. a daily visual inventory of office artwork and artifacts either by individual employees in their own offices or by a designated official;
- b. a process for reporting the absence of or damage to a museum object to the designated authority;
- c. procedures for securing the office when the area is left vacant during the day (e.g., when employees are at lunch or attending meetings); and,
- d. procedures for mitigating the impact of light and ultraviolet radiation (e.g., closing blinds or curtains at the end of the day).

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3. Emergency management procedures

If time allows in a pending disaster (e.g., storm, flood, or fire), there should be instructions in place that provide guidance for the safe and secure evacuation of artwork and artifacts. Such instructions may be either part of a unit's emergency management plan or a stand-alone document. As an example, one instruction might direct an office occupant (if circumstances permit) to throw a fire-retardant cover over a piece of furniture before exiting the office, or to close the office door behind them. Refer to Chapter 12, "Museum Property Emergency Planning," for guidance on developing emergency management plans.

4. Security of office areas and access procedures

Written policies and procedures for access to and movement of museum property should be prepared and implemented. Only the designated bureau official may approve the removal or relocation of museum property from one office to another. Refer also to Section F.4, "Handling Artwork and Artifacts" below.

Vandalism as well as theft may be a significant threat to museum property. Assess what risks are present at the unit and building level and in each office space in which museum property will be displayed. Although access to office areas is restricted in many units, additional measures may be needed in spaces where artwork and artifacts are displayed.

For example, although an approved pass may be required to gain entry to a building, access to a division's offices may be unrestricted. Consequently, the designated authority may prohibit the display of artwork in that division's reception area, or may require that displayed artwork be fitted with a local alarm device that would alert nearby staff to a potential problem. Alternatively, artwork might be displayed only in offices located beyond the receptionist's desk, or in offices with lockable doors. Refer to Appendix I, "Protection of Museum Property," Section E for sample access procedures.

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The designated authority may approve requests for access to artwork and artifacts by scholars or others who meet bureau guidelines for such access. The designated authority should consult the office occupant to determine a mutually convenient time to provide such access. Requests for photographs and for permission to reproduce photographs of museum property in publications should be referred to the designated authority.

5. Fire prevention, detection, and suppression

Smoking is prohibited in offices housing museum property. In addition, some hazardous practices, such as the use of portable space heaters, should be prohibited. If practical, museum property should be displayed only in areas equipped with fire detection systems. Fire suppression systems and/or equipment (e.g., fire extinguishers) should be appropriate to the kind of museum property in each office space. Refer to Chapter 11, "Museum Property and Fire Protection", Section E, for a detailed discussion of these issues.

E. ENVIRONMENT

Monitoring kits containing a portable thermohygrometer, and visible and UV light meters are available to bureau units through the bureau's designated authority.

1. Relative humidity and temperature

Levels of relative humidity and temperature should be monitored and recorded. The primary consideration of temperature and relative humidity (RH) levels in office spaces is the comfort and health of employees. Periodic monitoring of temperature and RH will indicate whether artwork and artifacts are likely to deteriorate in a particular office.

For example, a painting exhibited in the lobby of a building may be exposed to drafts from the exterior doors. Particularly if the building is located in a geographic area where there is an extreme range of

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temperature and relative humidity during the year (e.g., blizzards in winter and high humidity in summer), the painting will be exposed to unacceptable environmental fluctuations. It should be removed to a more stable area of the building, or a vestibule might be installed to buffer incoming drafts.

2. Light

The visible spectrum of light should be monitored for illuminance level and duration, should be controlled, and, to the extent practical, should meet the standards outlined in 411 DM 2.3C(1)(C) (see also 411 DM 2.3E(2)). Ultraviolet radiation should be controlled by a filtering material that has UV absorbing properties. Light and UV should be controlled by closing curtains or blinds, ensuring that UV-filtering plexiglas is used in framing artwork, installing UV filters over light fixtures and/or windows, relocating or removing artwork and artifacts exposed to unacceptable levels, or through other appropriate actions. Refer to Chapter 5, "Environmental Agents of Deterioration".

3. Integrated Pest Management

Spaces and objects should be monitored for pest infestations, and pest control actions should be in accordance with the Departmental pesticide policy outlined in 517 DM. A unit's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program can be readily expanded to include the preservation concerns of artwork and artifacts. Refer to Chapter 6, "Biological Infestations" for additional information. Examples of how the IPM program would affect office spaces are as follows:

- a) Pest protection for two paintings on display in an office space requires the following steps: ensure that the space and paintings are inspected for signs of pest activity on a quarterly basis; ensure that the person responsible for the quarterly inspection reports any pest activity to the person having pest management responsibilities (e.g., facility manager); and ensure that the pest management person knows who

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to call for technical assistance if either painting is infested.

- b) Pest protection for 25 Native American baskets in a display case located in an office space requires the steps outlined in the above example. However, in this instance, a sticky trap should be placed in the display case to facilitate monitoring for pest activity. On the other hand, except for periodic housekeeping tasks, an IPM program for rock and mineral specimens and metal instruments housed in a display case is not necessary.

F. DISPLAY TECHNIQUES

1. Displaying two-dimensional artwork

Artwork should be secured in a frame with a protective backing, and should be securely hung on the wall. Watercolor paintings, prints, and drawings should be matted with archival-quality material and protected by glass or other appropriate material.

The following suggestions for securing two-dimensional artwork to walls are designed to discourage unauthorized removal of artwork. Refer to Appendix J, "Museum Property Supplies and Equipment Sources" for vendors of the hardware discussed below.

- a) Instead of picture hooks, two L- or cup-hooks should be installed facing upwards. Place the picture wire over the hooks. Center another two hooks approximately 1/4" - 1/2" between and above the first two, this time facing downwards. Removing the artwork requires two people, and this technique deters a "snatch and run" theft.
- b) On the bottom corners of the frame, attach metal tabs with holes that extend below the bottom of the frame. Once the frame has been hung and leveled, screw the tabs into the wall. To prevent surreptitious theft, a tamper-resistant screw may be used. Note that this

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technique requires the use of a screwdriver to remove the artwork, thus delaying or preventing the removal of the piece in the event of a fire.

2. Locating artwork and artifacts in an office space

The placement of museum property should be away from heating and air-conditioning vents, and should be such that outside light does not fall directly on artwork and artifacts. Three-dimensional materials should be displayed in areas that minimize accidental damage.

- a. Analyze staff use of office spaces. Hang pictures away from narrow and/or heavily used thoroughfares. When placing an artifact on a bookshelf, position it as far from the front edge of the shelf as possible. Do not use museum property as a bookend. Protect objects from being accidentally bumped, dropped, dented, or scarred. If food and drink are brought into the office, make sure museum property is kept away from possible spills or deposits. Hang paintings safely, high above chairs and away from doors that might cause damage when opened.
- b. Place artwork and artifacts away from coffee makers or pieces of office equipment that generate heat or humidity.

3. Tapestries

Tapestries and other textiles should be hung so that their weight is evenly distributed. Metals and untreated wood should not be in contact with the tapestry. There are a number of current techniques for securing textiles within frames or suspending them from stretchers. It is recommended that a conservator be consulted to determine the proper display technique for tapestries.

4. Handling artwork and artifacts

Handling and dusting of museum property should be performed only by staff who have received appropriate training. Museum objects should not be idly handled out

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of curiosity or admiration. Office occupants should not attempt to repair broken or damaged artwork or artifacts. Pieces of an object that have broken off should be kept with the object. Damage to museum property should be reported to the designated authority immediately. General rules and procedures should be written to provide guidance on handling and housekeeping. Refer to Chapter 8, "Handling, Packing, and Shipping" for guidance on appropriate handling techniques.

G. DOCUMENTATION

The designated authority is responsible for maintaining all records pertaining to artwork and artifacts displayed in office spaces. The occupant may be provided with a copy of the item's catalog card or other informational material that relates the significance and importance of the items displayed in his/her office. The monetary value of the objects and donor or lender information generally should not be provided to employees. All questions regarding artwork and artifacts should be referred to the designated authority.

1. Lending artwork and artifacts for use in office spaces

All requests for loans should be referred to the responsible designated authority.

2. Annual inventory

On a regular basis determined by the bureau, the designated authority is required by Departmental policy (411 DM 3.4) to conduct an inventory to verify the presence of all museum property exhibited in office spaces. Inventory records should be updated in conjunction with any approved relocation of the museum property. Refer to the DOI Museum Property Handbook, Part II, Chapter 4 for guidance on conducting the annual inventory.

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EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY AGREEMENT

I, the undersigned, agree to adhere to the policies and procedures listed below as a condition of displaying artwork and/or artifacts of the (BUREAU'S NAME) in the office space that I occupy, or for which I am responsible. I understand that my responsibilities include the following:

1. providing routine daily security for the object by:
 - a. confirming that the item(s) is/are present upon my arrival at the office;
 - b. confirming that the item(s) is/are present when I exit the office at the end of my workday;
 - c. securing my office, if equipped with a lockable door, when vacant; and,
 - d. reporting the absence of or damage to museum property to the designated authority immediately.
2. adhering to guidelines regarding the preservation and protection of artwork and artifacts by:
 - a. refraining from smoking in my office or permitting others to do so;
 - c. keeping food and drink away from artwork and artifacts;
 - b. refraining from handling or moving artwork or artifacts in any way without prior authorization from the designated authority, including relocating the item to another office space;
 - c. refraining from using portable heating units; and,
 - d. refraining from inappropriate secondary use of artwork and artifacts (e.g., as a paper clip holder or door stop).
3. being alert to actions or conditions that endanger artwork and artifacts including:
 - a. movement or relocation of non-museum personal property (e.g., filing cabinets or chairs); or,
 - b. unsafe office cleaning practices (e.g., bumping into artwork or bookcases where artifacts are located with a vacuum cleaner, or allowing trash to accumulate overnight).

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Figure 15.1a. Sample Employee Responsibility Form

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4. notifying the designated authority regarding any concerns about artwork and artifacts displayed in my office space, such as the following:
 - a. extremes of temperature and/or humidity;
 - b. exposure of items to direct sunlight; and,
 - c. exposure of artwork to damaging or hazardous conditions such as heat exhaust from photocopying or fax machines.
5. providing the designated authority periodic access to the office and to the artwork and artifacts displayed therein at a mutually convenient time, for the following purposes:
 - a. monitoring the environment;
 - b. inspecting displayed artwork and artifacts;
 - c. providing access to researchers or other persons to whom the designated authority has granted access; and,
 - d. conducting the annual inventory.
6. notifying the designated authority no less than five days in advance of my impending transfer to another office or unit.

Signature _____ Date _____
Office Occupant

Signature _____ Date _____
Unit Manager

Signature _____ Date _____
Designated Authority

Catalog Number(s) _____

Object/Specimen Name(s) _____

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Figure 15.1b. Sample Employee Responsibility Form (Continued)

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